

Message Text

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43

ACTION EA-14

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R 161220Z JUL 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4655

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

CINCPAC

AMCONSUL DANANG

AMCONSUL NHA TRANG

USDEL JEC PARIS

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

UNCLAS SAIGON 12792

E.O. 11652 N/A

TAGS: PINT, VS

SUBJECT: CATHOLIC ARCHBISHOP ISSUES STATEMENT ON PRISONERS

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

1. SAIGON ARCHBISHOP NGUYEN VAN BINH ISSUED A STATEMENT JULY 16 ON THE SUBJECT OF YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS (YCW) IMPRISONED BY THE GVN AND ON RELATED ISSUES. THE ENGLISH TEXT AS PUBLISHED BY OFFICIAL VIETNAM PRESS AND DISTRIBUTED AT GVN JULY 16 PRESS BRIEFING FOLLOWS: BEGIN TEXT IF DISTURBS ME GREATLY THAT THE ISSUE OF THE YOUNG CHRISTIAN WORKERS (YCW) LEADERS, WHO WERE IMPRISONED LAST YEAR, SHOULD BE CAUSING SO MUCH DIFFICULTY IN CATHOLIC CHURCH CIRCLES IN THE UNITED STATES AND AUSTRALIA.

THE YCW OR JOC IS AN ORGANIZATION WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED WITH THE OBJECTIVE OF ENHANCING THE SPIRITUAL AND SOCIAL WELFARE OF
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YOUNG WORKERS. IT WAS HOPED THAT YOUNG WORKERS WOULD JOIN

TOGETHER FOR THIS PUPOSE, AS WELL AS TO STRIVE TOGETHER IN PEACE TO IMPROVE THEIR WORKING CONDITIONS. HOWEVER, TODAY, UNFORTUNATELY, THERE ARE FEW WORKERS IN THE YCW IN SAIGON. NEARLY ALL OF ITS ACTIVE MEMBERS ARE STUDENTS. IT IS CLEAR THAT THEIR PURPOSE IS TO USE THE YCW ORGANIZATION FOR VARIOUS KINDS OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY. THE YCW SHOULD NOT BE USED FOR POLITICS.

THE FIVE IMPRISONED YCW LEADERS, FOUR OF WHOM HAVE NOW BEEN RELEASED, WERE ARRESTED IN 1972, NOT SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY OPPOSED THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT, BUT BECAUSE THEY WERE DIRECTLY OR INDIRECTLY INVOLVED IN ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES. THESE ACTIVITIES HAVE INCLUDED, AT VARIOUS TIMES, THE PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION OF CLEARLY ILLEGAL PROPAGANDA TRACTS, THE MANUFACTURING OF MOLOTOV CONCKTAILS, AND PARTICIPATION IN VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS. THEY ARE THEREFORE NOT (INNOCENT POLITICAL OPPONENTS' OF THE PRESENT GOVERNMENT.

IT HAS BEEN REPORTED IN INTERNATIONAL CIRCLES THAT THE YCW LEADERS SUFFERED 'PROLONGED TORTURES' AND ILL-TREATMENT AT THE HANDS OF AUTHORITIES DURING THEIR IMPRISONMENT AT CON SON ISLAND (POULO CONDORE). IT HAS ALSO BEEN CLAIMED THAT THE FOUR WHO HAVE NEW BEEN RELEASED ARE SUFFERING FROM 'SEVERE PHYSICAL AND MENTAL DISABILITIES' AS A RESULT OF PROLONGED TORTURES AT CON SON. WHILE IT IS ALWAYS DIFFICULT TO EATISFACTORILY ASCERTAIN ALL THE DETAILS IN EASES SUCH AS THIS, AND ENQUIRIES ARE CONTINUING, IT CAN BE SAID WITH CERTAINTY THAT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE AT ALL TO SUPPORT THESE CLEAIMS. IN FACT ALL THE EVIDENCE POINTS TO THE CONTRARY. I AM SATISFIED THAT THE YCW LEADERS WERE NOT SUBJECTED TO TORTURE BY THE PRISON AUTHORITIES AT ANY TIME DURING THEIR IMPRISENMENT.

I HAVE ALSO READ BISHOP GUMBLETON'S ARITICLE IN THE NATIONAL CATHOLIC REPORTER OF MAY 11, 1973. THE ARTICLE IS MOST DISTRESSING. IF FIND IT DIFFICULT TO UNDERSTAND HOW BISHOP GUMBLETON CAN WRITE SUCH MISLEADING, IF NOT TENDENTIOUS THINGS. THEY DO NOT TRULY REFLECT THE SITUATION IN VIETNAM. FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS NOT ACCURATE TO SAY THAT PEOPLE ARE GAOLED'SIMPLY BECAUSE THEY ARE IN POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT.' THERE ARE MANY GOOD PEOPLE OF VARIOUS RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND POLITICAL GROUPS AND OPINIONS WHO ARE GENUINELY AND FREELY IN POLITICAL OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT. I FEAR THAT BISHOP GUMBLETON MIGHT BE CONFUSING GENUINE AND RESPONSIBLE POLITICAL OPPOSITION WITH ILLEGAL, CRIMINAL AND SOMETIMES VIOLENT, 'POLITICAL' UNCLASSIFIED

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ACTIVITY OF WHICH IN THIS COUNTRY HANOI'S NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT HAS BEEN THE PRINCIPAL EXPONENT. END TEXT.

2. THIS STATMENT HAS ATTRACTED THE INTEREST OF AMERICAN CORRESPONDENTS

IN SAIGON AND MAY RECEIVE U.S. PRESS COVERAGE.APPLING

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